

Always Judge A Book By Its Cover

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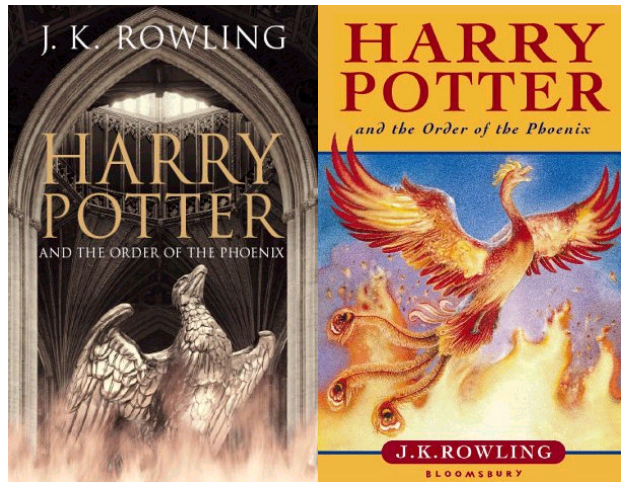
Once again, it is that time to “judge a Harry Potter book by its cover.” Remember two years ago after Goblet of Fire came out and we all realized that the cover was giving obvious hints?

Even though we were waaaaay off, it was still fun to make the guesses. I remember mistaking Cedric for Ron, Krum for Sirius, Fleur for Icicle Weasley, the Triwizard Tournament for a Quidditch game, and death eaters for dementors. Yet I remember my friends and I did get some things right, we guessed that the kid (who we had mistaken for Ron) would be the one to die. We also

guessed that spiders would be involved (particularly Aragog- who did not).

First, let’s state the validity of these covers. According to BBC Newsround, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/newsid_2867000/2867757.stm) “The contents of

the book are so secret that even the artist, illustrator Jason Cockcroft, wasn’ t allowed to read it before drawing the cover. Instead J K Rowling and her editor at Bloomsbury, Emma Matthewson, came up with the idea and then told the artist the kind of image they wanted them to create.” On the other hand, according to The Leaky Cauldron (www.the-leaky-cauldron.org), “This afternoon, TLC spoke with a representative for Mary GrandPré ... about Mary’ s work on OoTP...Unlike the UK artist, Mary has read the entire book, and the cover illustration is, therefore, inspired by her read of OoTP.” Thus, we can safely assume that the American cover is a slightly better one to obtain clues from.



Let’s take a look at the visual clues in the front covers (US and UK) of Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix and return in three months to see how “off” are this time around.

The following chapters are found below:

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- IV. Bloomsbury’s Beliefs
- V. Miscellaneous Matters

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I. Rhapsody in Blue

First of all, note that the primary color shown is blue. This is clearly different from all of the other four books which were much more colorful. In fact, this picture gives quite a mood of foreboding (more on this on another chapter). According to CBBC Newsaround (http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/newsid_2867000/2867757.stm), ‘It is drawn in tones of midnight blue, indigo and flame blue.’ I would like to draw the attention to the color ‘flame blue.’ Notice that the picture is lit up solely (as far as we can tell) with blue candles. From the past, a blue flame is mentioned many times in Harry Potter. Namely, here are (hopefully) all of them:

Book 1, Chapter 11: Quidditch (page 181, US Edition)

‘The day before Harry’s first Quidditch match the three of them were out in the freezing courtyard during break, and she [Hermione] had conjured them up a bright blue fire that could be carried around in a jam jar.’

Book 1, Chapter 11: Quidditch (page 191, US Edition)

‘Reaching Snape, she [Hermione] crouched down, pulled out her wand, and whispered a few, well-chosen words. Bright blue flames shot from her wand onto the hem of Snape’s robes.’

Book 1, Chapter 16: Through the Trapdoor (page 278, US Edition)

‘‘Oh, right!’ said Hermione, and she whipped out her wand, waved it, muttered something, and sent a jet of the same bluebell flames she had used on Snape at the plant. In a matter of seconds, the two boys felt it loosening its grip as it cringed away from the light and warmth.’

Book 2, Chapter 9: The Deathday Party (page 131, US Edition)

‘The passageway leading to Nearly Headless Nick’s party had been lined with candles, too, though the effect was far from cheerful: These were long, thin, jet-black tapers, all burning bright blue, casting a dim, ghostly light even over their own living faces.’

Book 4, Chapter 16: The Goblet of Fire (page 255, US Edition)

‘Dumbledore reached inside it and pulled out a large, roughly hewn wooden cup. It would have been entirely unremarkable had it not been full to the brim with dancing blue-white flames.’

Book 4, Chapter 16: The Goblet of Fire (page 268, US Edition)

‘He [Dumbledore] took out his wand and gave a great sweeping wave with it; at once, all the candles except those inside the carved pumpkins were extinguished, plunging them into a state of semidarkness. The Goblet of Fire now shone more brightly than anything

in the whole Hall, the sparkling bright, bluey-whiteness of the flames almost painful on the eyes.”

Blue flames in these books apparently are seen in many different instances. Yet the latter three involve darkness. The cover itself also brings certain mysticism with everything lit in blue. The picture is probably foreshadowing death or Harry in a dangerous place/position he should not be. (More on setting discussed later.)

II. Location, Location, Location

Location is also an essential aspect for this book. The only visual clues shown are the three doors and the numerous floating candles. Three doors in a row have certainly not been mentioned in any of the books but floating candles have been. Yet, these candles seem to be unique to the Great Hall. In fact, Rowling has talked about floating candles every single year when referring to the Great Hall. Shown below, are occurrences:

Book 1, Chapter 7: The Sorting Hat (page 116, US Edition)

“Harry had never even imagined such a strange and splendid place. It was lit by thousands and thousands of candles that were floating in midair over four long tables, where the rest of the students were sitting.”

Book 2, Chapter 5: The Whomping Willow (page 76, US Edition)

“Harry hurried over and, together, he and Ron peered in at the Great Hall. Innumerable candles were hovering in midair over four long, crowded tables, making the golden plates and goblets sparkle.”

Book 2, Chapter 11: The Dueling Club (page 188-189, US Edition)

“Harry and Hermione were all for it, so at eight o’clock that evening they hurried back to the Great Hall. The long dining tables had vanished and a golden stage had appeared along one wall, lit by thousands of candles floating overhead.”

Book 3, Chapter 5: The Dementor (page 90, US Edition)

“It was a sea of pointed black hats; each of the long House tables was lined with students, their faces glimmering by the light of thousands of candles, which were floating over the tables in midair.”

Book 4, Chapter 12: The Triwizard Tournament (page 173, US Edition)

“The Great Hall looked its usual splendid self, decorated for the start-of-term feast. Golden plates and goblets gleamed by the light of hundreds and hundreds of candles, floating over the tables in midair.”

So, is it safe to assume that this is a picture of the Great Hall? I mean, it does have a dark ceiling... Well, maybe. But, probably not. The reason is because of the three small doors and the fact that the room seems to be circular. Certainly the large hall is not circular in any place. In fact, the only circular rooms mentioned are Dumbledore’s

office, the dormitories, and (maybe) the Astronomy Tower. Luckily, according to an EW Magazine interview in 2000 (<http://www.ew.com/ew/report/0,6115,85523~5~5,00.html>) Rowling says, ‘But also there are places in the world that I’ ve been planning for so long and thinking about for so long that we haven’ t yet explored, and it’ s great fun. That will happen in book 5, too; we go into a whole new area, physically, an area you’ ve never seen before, a magical world.’

What other possibilities are there? Some candidates include Azkaban, The Ministry of Magic, The Riddle House, and perhaps other wizarding schools. Azkaban is my personal favorite and it would be very interesting if Harry visits. The mood in the picture certainly supports this idea along with the darkness behind the doors. Although, if Harry was there, he would probably look more grim (from the dementors – or would they have already escaped?) and the doors don’t look like they belong in a prison. Another thought is that it’s the Ministry of Magic. The doors could certainly be office doors, yet it seems unlikely that the place would be dark and foreboding. Although The Riddle House has been visited already, it could be a possibility. The doors certainly look like they could belong in a house and candles add to the spookiness. The thought of other wizarding schools is also possible. Other schools probably have floating candles, just as Hogwarts does. This is also not very probable either. It would certainly be strange for Harry to visit another school with a dark lord wandering around.

Then again, this may be a place that has never been mentioned in any of the books. A suggestion may be a ring of offices of famous wizards. From the picture, Harry seems to be climbing up stairs. This is evident in the fact that the candles on the right and left are higher up as one moves closer to the doors and the fact that the doors appear to be higher as well (unless the doors are really long and skinny, that is). This may also be supported by the title of the book ‘Order of the Phoenix’ (like ‘Order of Merlin’), which sounds like a group of people working for a common cause. This cause is most likely getting rid of Voldemort. Also, the circular room could represent unity just like how Voldemort’s death eaters get into a circle. A second idea is quite a stretch, but certainly possible. Rowling has said in an AOL chat in 2000 (<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.net/aol.shtml>), “ Q: Why do some wizards/witches become ghosts and others don’ t? A: Another superb question, and this time I can tell you that you will find out much more about that in book five.” Also, Nearly Headless Nick’s party included blue candles, so it might be a conclusion that this is actually some place where ghosts gather. The picture is certainly spooky enough.

The final guess is probably the best and this is adopted from mugglenet.com. In a previous interview with JK Rowling, (<http://www.comicrelief.com/harrysbooks/pages/transcript2.shtml>), ‘Q: If you could travel to Hogwarts for an hour, what would you do there? A: Go straight into a certain room, mentioned in book four which has certain magical properties Harry hasn’ t discovered yet!’ So, could the room shown possibly be the magical room? Well, certainly it looks like it belongs in a school and we already know that Hogwarts has floating candles. So, what room could this possibly be? Well, here’s a quotation from the 4th book that may give an explanation:

Book 4, Chapter 23: The Yule Ball (page 417, US Edition)

“‘Oh I would never dream of assuming I know all Hogwarts’ secrets, Igor,’ said Dumbledore amicably. ‘Only this morning, for instance, I took a wrong turning on the way to the bathroom and found myself in a beautifully proportioned room I have never seen before, containing a really rather magnificent collection of chamber pots. When I went back to investigate more closely, I discovered that the room had vanished...?... Percy frowned, but Harry could have sworn Dumbledore had given him a very small wink.’”

Well, this could possibly be a joke, but I had second thoughts on the ‘small wink’ part and the words ‘beautifully proportioned.’ It is highly possible that ‘beautifully proportioned’ means circular room, referring to the one on the cover. Hmm... although, I wonder where the chamber pots are (LOL, j/k). I’m sure there must be some truth in his testimony.

III. One Less Than Unlucky

Note: This idea is a derivative of one from mugglenet.com

The number 13 is obviously a very unlucky number, yet the number 12, one less than 13 appears quite often in Harry Potter. Take a look at the front cover again and notice that there are exactly 12 candles in the foreground. Since GrandPré has obviously read the book, there must be something special about that number of candles. In fact, mugglenet.com has a whole listing of every time ‘12’ appears in Harry Potter books. (You can check that out at <http://www.mugglenet.com/oddities.shtml>). Yet, certainly not all of those incidents are connected together. Maybe the number 12 is just a motif within the books and not a symbol. After all, it is common sense that there are usually 12 hours on a clock and getting 12 OWLs is considered a good job. Yet, it is still interesting to note that the number 12 is used quite often. So, what could the 12 candles possibly represent? Well, one theory could be that Voldemort killed 12 people. If you think about it, ancients used to think that if somebody passed away, a new star would be born. So candles might represent the same in the wizarding world. Another idea is that there are also 12 doors in the circular room Harry is in. This could possibly mean that 12 people make up the Order of the Phoenix.

IV. Bloomsbury’s Beliefs

Now that I have stared and stared at the US Harry Potter cover until I have it memorized in my mind, we’ll shift to the British cover. Since Rowling told Jason Cockcroft what to draw, there are at least some clues hidden in this one. Notice the cover is much more cheerful and colorful. Already noted by CBBC Newsaround (http://news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/uk/newsid_2867000/2867757.stm), this is the first time that Harry has not appeared on the cover.

In fact, the cover looks more like a symbol rather than an actual scene in the book. From one of Rowling’s Comic Relief books,

[Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them](#), Phoenix (page 32, US Edition)

“Phoenix song is magical; it is reputed to increase the courage of the pure of heart and to strike fear into the hearts of the impure.”

It looks as if the phoenix on the picture, presumably Fawkes, is singing. This is bringing hope into the Order of the Phoenix. So, this is probably supporting that the Order is a group of people who are willing to bring down Voldemort. Also, the bird is rising from the flames, probably symbolizing some sort of rebirth or reuniting of the ‘old gang.”

This of course, leads to a tangent of who is in this gang. Obviously, from book 4:

Book 4, Chapter 36: The Parting of the Ways (page 713, US Edition)

“‘Now I have work for each of you. Fudge’s attitude, though not unexpected, changes everything. Sirius, I need you to set off at once. You are to alert Remus Lupin, Arabella Figg, Mundungus Fletcher – the old crowd. Lie low at Lupin’s for a while; I will contact you there.”

I wouldn’t be surprised if Sirius and Snape are both in it as well and along with Dumbledore, Alastor Moody, and Mr. Weasley.

V. Miscellaneous Matters

So, now that most of the more important items on the picture are discussed, let’s take a look at the other things the picture has to show.

First, note that Harry is looking at something on the top right hand of the page. This is also where most of the light source appears to be coming from as noted from how Harry’s hair and shirt are colored. Even the candles in the foreground are blowing towards the left.

Speaking of candles, the candles in the background are blowing towards the right. This might suggest that there is some sort of breeze coming from behind the doors that are ajar.

Also, note that on the word ‘Phoenix,” the ‘ i ’ is dotted with a small blue-white flame. This is a motif from the cover of the fourth book where ‘e’ in the word ‘Fire” has a small blue-white flame on it too.

Once again, Harry is holding his wand in his left hand, just like in Goblet of Fire. Sorcerer’s Stone states:

Book 1, Chapter 5: Diagon Alley (page 83, US Edition)

“‘Well, now – Mr. Potter. Let me see.’ He pulled a long tape measure with silver markings out of his pocket. ‘Which is your wand arm?’ ‘Er – well, I’m right-handed,’ said Harry.”

This most likely asserts that Harry holds his wand in his right hand.

VI. Share Your Ideas

Now, if you've read this far, you're pretty good and probably obsessed with Harry Potter (just as I am). I'm sure you also have thoughts and theories on this cover yourself. If you do, I would suggest that you share them. You can...

E-mail me at owlpost8@hotmail.com and I would be glad to add your thoughts to my site.

Or visit one of the better sites like:

iHarry Potter

<http://www.iharrypotter.net/books/phoenix/>

-this page has such a long list of ideas you can probably spend hours reading it

MuggleNet

<http://www.mugglenet.com/bookfivetheories.shtml>

-this page also has a fair amount of good theories

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